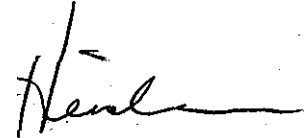


Avery Re-Use Committee

January 5, 2012

TO: James MacDonald, Chr., Dedham Board of Se men

FR: Joe Heisler, Chr., Avery Re-Use Committee



RE: Final Report: Recommendations for Re-U nd Certain Conditions

On behalf of the entire committee, Jay O'Brien, vice-chair; Marie Naughton, Clerk; and members Jennifer Barsamian, Barbara Gula, Charles Krueger, William Podolski and Selectman Paul Reynolds, I do hereby respectfully submit our final report, with recommendations and certain conditions, for re-use of the Avery School building and property at 123 High Street. We hope it meets your expectations and is helpful in your deliberations. We thank you for the opportunity to engage the community in this discussion, helping to ensure an open and transparent decision-making process. We believe the report speaks for itself, and stand fully behind its recommendations and conclusions; the report received unanimous support from the committee.

Having fulfilled our duties to the best of our abilities, as outlined by the Board of Selectmen, the committee does now respectfully request that it be dissolved and relieved of further responsibilities.

Avery Re-Use Committee

F i n a l R e p o r t

Recommendations for Re-Use and Certain Conditions

The Avery:

The current school at 123 High Street was built in 1921 following a devastating fire that destroyed the prior structure. As currently configured, it includes 15 classrooms, auxiliary office space, a small gymnasium with stage and a modern library/media center. The approximately 39,000 square foot structure sits on a 3.8 acre parcel of land abutting the Mother Brook in the rear and High Street at its front. A feasibility study conducted by architects Dore and Whittier as part of the School Department's Master Planning process determined that the facility, while still structurally sound and still usable, was educationally obsolete for the requirements of 21st century education. With state funding from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, town voters in 2010 approved a debt exclusion to fund the construction of a new Avery School on Pottery Lane, adjacent to the high school campus. The new school is tentatively scheduled to open in April 2012, at which time the school department is expected to declare the current school site surplus to its educational needs and turn the property over to the Town of Dedham.

The Committee:

Anticipating the opening of the new facility and the closing of the current school, the Board of Selectmen voted in 2010 to create an ad hoc committee — the Avery Re-Use Committee -- to examine potential re-uses of the High Street facility and property and to make recommendations to the board. The charge given the committee was to determine what reuse options would be: 1.) most desirable to the community and, 2.) feasible to implement. The committee was comprised of eight members: 1 each from the Board of Selectmen (Paul Reynolds) Planning Committee (James O'Brien) FinCom (William Podolski) School Committee (Joe Heisler), Precinct 3 (Charles Krueger), Precinct 6 (Barbara Gula), member of the East Dedham business community (Marie Naughton) and one at-Large member (Jennifer Barsamian). A seat intended for a representative of the Building, Planning and Construction Committee was unfilled. The committee was officially organized in January, 2011, electing Heisler as chair and O'Brien as vice-chair.

Due Diligence:

Informed by the past history of school building dispositions in Dedham (Quincy/Ames Schools), the committee made transparency and public participation a priority from the outset of the process. Over the course of 11 months, the Avery Reuse Committee held 10 public meetings, many in the Avery School library or gymnasium, including one community-wide meeting in conjunction with the Mother Brook Community Group, to solicit public participation and input into the reuse process and possible uses of the Avery School. All meetings provided extensive opportunities for public comment and question and answer sessions, and scores of town residents took advantage to voice their concerns, hopes and preferences.

The process and meetings were given extensive coverage by local media including the Dedham Times, Dedham Transcript and Dedham Patch, as well as additional communication through several

committee members social networking efforts. Notice of the intent of the process and next meetings were sent to all residents of Precincts 3 and 6, as part of the outreach for Town Flail to Neighborhood meetings. Separately, an email list of interested neighbors and residents was developed and all were regularly apprised of meeting dates. All meetings were also posted at Town Hall, and copies of the minutes filed with the Town Clerk.

Various town department heads and staff provided information and expertise to the committee regarding the redevelopment process, building status and conditions, site restrictions, and re-use options, including William Keegan, Town Administrator; Karen O'Connell, Economic Development Director; June Doe, Superintendent of Schools; Richard McCarthy, Town Planner; and Ken Cimen, Building Commissioner; Police Chief Michael D'Entremont; and Fire Chief William Cullinane. Other town officials including Selectmen Michael Butler and Carmen Dello Iacono, as well as School Building Rehabilitation Committee Chair Andrew Lawlor and Master Planning Committee Co-Chair Shaw McDermott also provided valuable input. In addition, ten different town agency heads were invited to appear to discuss facility and programming needs and to determine whether the site was appropriate for municipal use: Those invited included Bob Stanley, Parks and Recreation Dept., Robert Blaney, Youth Commission, Council on Aging Chair Leanne Jasset; Library Trustees Chair Joe D'Amico, Joe Flanagan, Public Works; David Fields, Engineering, Police Chief Michael D'Entremont; Fire Chief William Cullinane, Keegan and Dedham Housing Authority Director Joanne Toomey.

Many other members of the Dedham community also spoke from the audience with special knowledge on various topics regarding the history, infrastructure needs, and re-development options. Special presentations were made by architect Brad Dore of Dore and Whittier Architects; Dedham Historical Society Executive Director Vicky Kruckeberg; Wellesley Community Center Board chair David Walsh; and Hebrew Senior Life Intergenerational Program Coordinator Lynda Busgang.

Site visits were conducted by various Avery Re-Use Committee members to reused and/or other similar community facilities, including Warren House, a former Newton middle school, redeveloped by Newton Community Development Corporation into mixed housing; Wellesley Community Center, a 501C3 corporation that serves social and community needs, including the Wellesley Council on Aging; Norwood Civic Center, a former armory redeveloped by the town for office and recreational uses; the Savage Center, a Norwood middle school that has been converted into school department administrative space, a day care, and an adult education training center with a new annex built to house the Norwood Senior Center; Emerson Umbrella, Concord, MA, a former high school converted into a community arts center; and the Milton Art Center, a former branch library reborn as an art gallery through the efforts of a local arts non-profit group FAVA — the Friends and Advocates of Visual Art.

Survey: An informal survey (see attachment) was developed and distributed at the Mother Brook community meeting and posted on the town's web site asking residents to list priority uses of the space. Participation was limited and the sample was small, though it helped inform the committee on the priorities of the community

Findings:

- **Interim Use:** Chief among the concerns voiced by several neighborhood residents and direct abutters of the property was the prospect that upon transfer of the property from the school department to the town, the building would go vacant, unused and neglected, becoming blighted and a target for vandals. The committee was asked to include interim or temporary uses among its goals but deferred after consulting with the Board of Selectmen. Town Administrator Keegan acknowledged that town funds for maintenance of the property upon transfer to the town are not included in the FY'12 budget and beyond. The issue of maintenance costs of the site pending its designation and disposition for permanent re-use remains unaddressed and a point of deep concern among neighborhood residents, and should be a priority for the Board of Selectmen (see Next Steps below). The neighborhood residents voiced fears that if the facility is vacated and left unused even in the short term, it would have a negative impact on public safety and property values in the immediate area.
- **Community Use:** Based on public comments, direct testimony and survey results, the preferred re-use of the Avery was for community purposes, with an emphasis on intergenerational programming that would serve the needs of both youth and adults, especially seniors. The number one response on the liMited survey conducted by the committee was re-use as a senior center, though that was eventually ruled out (see Municipal Use below), followed closely by a community center. Re-use of the site as a new police station was a distant third. Several residential abutters to the Avery said a police/fire station, or other use that resulted in 24 hour/seven day a week operations, was not appropriate for the site and would result in an unwanted increase in neighborhood noise, night light, parking and traffic. Dan Hart, chairman of the Mother Brook Community Group, the East Dedham-based neighborhood association, declined to recommend a specific use but he urged the committee to maintain a public purpose for the facility, one that would continue to provide services to the surrounding community, and asked that it not be sold by the town for private development. Hart said productive re-use of the facility is integral to the efforts of the non-profit organization to help revitalize the economy of the neighborhood.
- **Municipal Use:** Before determining whether private or non-profit re-use of the Avery might be appropriate, the committee decided it needed first to ascertain if municipal use was an option. Ten town department and agency heads were asked to appear before the committee in order to determine if their respective agency had use for the facility. Town Administrator Keegan told the committee that relocating Town Hall to the Avery on a permanent or temporary basis was not warranted by cost and space considerations. Police Chief D'Entremont said that while his department had need for a new departmental headquarters, the Avery site location and size would preclude its re-use without substantial renovations and/or demolition and associated costs. He said the department might consider making use of a small portion of the site for temporary or even permanent police substation. Fire Chief Cullinane said the town had recently invested substantial funds in the rehabilitation of the existing East Dedham fire station, and that the Avery was not located centrally enough to the rest of the town to make it practical as a central or combined public safety facility. The Council on Aging submitted a letter stating it is focusing its efforts to build a new senior center on a different location in town and is not interested in the Avery at this time. Council Chair Jasset read the letter into the record and confirmed the council's position. Likewise, Library Trustees Chair D'Amico wrote to say that the Dedham Public Library has no

interest in re-use of the Avery. Parks and Recreation Director Stanley said his department might make use of a portion of the site, though staffing shortages and budgetary considerations precluded any discussion of expansion of facilities beyond its current site at the SMA Father's on Common Street. In earlier testimony, Dedham Youth Commission Director Robert Blaney suggested his agency might be prepared to offer some limited programming on site, such as after school programs, but expressed no direct interest in relocating or managing the site. Public Works Director Flanagan, Engineering head Fields, and Dedham Housing Authority Executive Director Toomey did not respond to the committee's invitation in person nor in writing.

- **Housing:** Opposition was expressed by numerous residents to any form of housing on the property -- senior housing, mixed affordable housing, loft space or private condominiums -- citing concerns about increased density, parking and traffic. It was a mantra that committee members heard at nearly every one of its meetings. Economic Development Director O'Connell said the option of housing could be key component in attracting the necessary financing to rehabilitate and preserve the existing structure. Town Administrator Keegan said some private developers had expressed a willingness to rehabilitate the facility as a senior center if allowed to also build housing on the site. Building Commissioner Cimeno indicated that re-use of the facility or site for housing would require two-thirds approval of Town Meeting. Town Planner McCarthy said Avery re-use for housing would require a zoning change and result in an extensive review of any such proposal by various town boards.
- **Historic Preservation:** The Avery currently has no state or national designation as an historic place or structure, according to Dedham Historical Society Executive Director Kruckeberg. However, she said it occupies a unique place in the history of Dedham, given its location adjacent to historic Mother Brook, the first man-made canal in the U.S. built in 1639, and the 'mill village' it was built to serve. The near uniform opinion of all those who testified was that every effort should be made to preserve the facade, if not the entire building. Dedham's Master Plan also calls for preserving historic or potentially historic buildings that contribute to the town's heritage. Independent research shows that based on the age of the building alone, rehabilitation of the facility could qualify for financing through state and federal historic preservation tax credits. Architect Brad Dore said that his study of the building showed that while it was no longer functional for use as a school, the facility is still fully usable, though in need of some repair to its infrastructure and continued maintenance. Designation for re-use would likely require changes to make the facility more fully handicap accessible, and Fire Chief Cullinane indicated a change in use might also require some fire safety upgrades. Some designated re-uses might require additional zoning changes, parking restrictions or water conservation measures. However, town officials indicated those would be limited if the building continued to serve a public purpose and the footprint of the building did not change significantly. -

Recommended Use(s):

- 1.) Arts and Community Center: As its preferred use, the committee voted unanimously to recommend the Avery is leased to a non-profit entity for the express purpose of creating an arts and community center to provide intergenerational arts and educational programming to seniors, youth and the community at-large. The center would be required to be financially self-sustainable, and would not require town funding to operate. The center would rent studio, gallery and storage space to artists, with a preference given to Dedham artists. It would not include housing, in keeping with neighborhood preferences. The center would also provide space for neighborhood meetings, social/cultural events, performances, as well as occasional municipal use as a polling place or for mini-town meetings, and perhaps some limited recreational and/or afterschool programming for youth. The need for facility space by local non-profits and charitable organizations that serve the community, such as the Dedham Food Pantry, could also be served by the new center, depending upon available space.
- 2.) Senior Center: The committee also unanimously approved an alternative use if the preferred use is determined to be unfeasible. In recognition of town's continuing efforts to develop a new senior center, the committee voted to recommend possible town re-use of the facility as a senior center serving the needs of the 'senior community, despite the letter from the Council on Aging rejecting the Avery as a potential site (see Municipal Use above). However, the committee also agreed that if such use should ever be considered, it should not include a housing component on site.

Conditions:

In addition to its recommendations regarding re-use the committee also voted to recommend several conditions governing such uses.

- 1.) Site ownership be maintained by the town, with operational and management responsibility for the facility and grounds conveyed by lease only.
- 2.) The existing structure, especially the building facade, shall be preserved and maintained where practicable. Outside grounds will be maintained within current Zoning Board, Conservation Committee and Planning Board guidelines and best efforts will be made to enhance the aesthetics and use of green space on site.
- 3.) The Town shall provide funding to fully maintain the facility until another operational entity is fully in place. The building envelope will not be altered by boarding windows or doors. Landscaping will remain status quo, and the parking lot will be plowed in winter.
- 4.) The board Of directors of the non-profit operational and management entity shall include strong representation from the East Dedham community, including residents from Precincts 3 and 6.

Non-Profit Entity:

The committee recommendation is that ToWn Meeting be asked to approve a long-term lease at a nominal fee with a new non-profit entity — the so-called Mother Brook Partnership -- that would be formed as an organizational umbrella to operate and manage the new center, in accordance with its mission. The organization's board of directors should include strong neighborhood representation, community non-profit stakeholders in arts, music and performance, as well as the larger community. A majority of the board of directors should be Dedham residents. The town administrator, or a town representative, should be seated on the board of directors as a non-voting member, to advise the board of town interests. The lease agreement should include certain benchmarks, protecting the town from financial and legal liability, and that if the center is shown to not be financially sustainable, give the town the option to reconsider its use. The organization should be self-sustainable and operate on a cooperative model that would allow for multiple uses and sources of revenue to renovate and rehabilitate any structural deficiencies. However the lease should provide for "as is," usage, including temporary use for other means such as rentals and short-term leases, which could help to bridge finance costs during start-up. The entity shall develop a set of bylaws that reflects the mission of the center. The Center's governance would draw from existing best practices for the effective management of complex, nonprofit organizations as prescribed by the Secretary of the Commonwealth, outlined in M.G.L.A. c180 § 4 (1971); 950 CMR 106.03.

Mission:

The mission of this not-for-profit, member & sponsor-supported organization would be to enrich the entire community by supporting arts, culture, as well as life-long learning & civic engagement for all ages. Its goal would be to create a vibrant, innovative, inclusive, and sustainable umbrella organization that makes best efforts to service the entire community with balanced arts & community services — with special emphasis on ensuring that those in more financially challenged situations are afforded access to the Center's facilities and programs.

The facility would provide a combination of artist workspaces, multi-use community meeting spaces, and co-op offices that would provide a home for the many arts, community development organizations, and charitable service agencies in Dedham. The Center will develop a social entrepreneurship model, by generating income from rental income, course fees, cafe/shop sales and event admissions — thereby developing a sustainable mechanism that would allow it not to be dependent solely on grants and philanthropic funding.

The organization may also provide shared resources required by most non-profit arts/civic organizations — including fundraising, promotion, administrative/legal and communication support/tools. This co-op approach to shared infrastructure will help alleviate the burden of these organizational necessities for its member organizations. Other proposed facility features, are contingent upon funding, feasibility and any appropriate regulatory guidelines.

The center's programs and use of space should be coordinated with municipal departments such as Dedham Parks & Recreation, Council on Aging, Dedham Youth Commission, Dedham Civic Pride, and community groups such as *Mother Brook Community Group*.

While early phases of the project would initially use the existing building virtually "as is" with no major restoration investment, the mission of the organization shall be to eventually restore and update the building with optimized green/renewable energy systems through a best-in-class green building/sustainable development approach. Increased access to Mother Brook and adjacent parkland and environmentally sensitive usage of such shall be another goal of the organization.

BOS Next Steps:

- Grant approval for development of a warrant article, or placeholder, for Town Meeting that would authorize the town to enter into a lease agreement with the new entity for operation and management of the center.
- Direct town counsel to develop a long-term lease agreement that provide for the non-profit entity to operate and manage the facility and site yet protect the town's legal and financial interests
- Create a steering committee to facilitate and direct development of the non-profit entity, seek state and federal 501c3 charitable status, and begin fundraising.
- Seek state and federal grant funds to conduct a feasibility study to determine best uses and practice in operation of the center, market conditions and the cost and sources of funding for any necessary renovations.
- Budget funds necessary to maintain the facility until a lease agreement is approved and executed.
- Dissolve the Avery Re-Use Committee

ATTACHEMENT A:

Vision Statement for the proposed Mother Brook Arts & Community Center

The Mother Brook Arts & Community Center seeks to promote positive, town-wide community development and local neighborhood revitalization by the support and promotion of healthy arts & cultural organizations, well-resourced artists, and enriched by well-integrated arts, cultural and community-building activities. Our mission is to serve people of all ages and abilities — providing activities that promote connection, collaboration, creativity and community.

It is our hope that by creating this vibrant community resource there will be an economic rippling effect into the surrounding neighborhoods — attracting more positive, economic development — new bistros, coffee shops, galleries — resulting in new jobs for local residents.

The **Mother Brook Arts & Community Center** is dedicated to:

Creating opportunity and enhancing access to arts and culture through programs that involve people of all social and economic backgrounds and encourage participation of new and nontraditional audiences.

Exhibiting a high level of community impact through work that contributes to a vibrant arts and cultural ecosystem, benefits the broad local community and reflects the diversity of the community population, advances community-building efforts and embodies key principles of community planning to enhance quality of life.

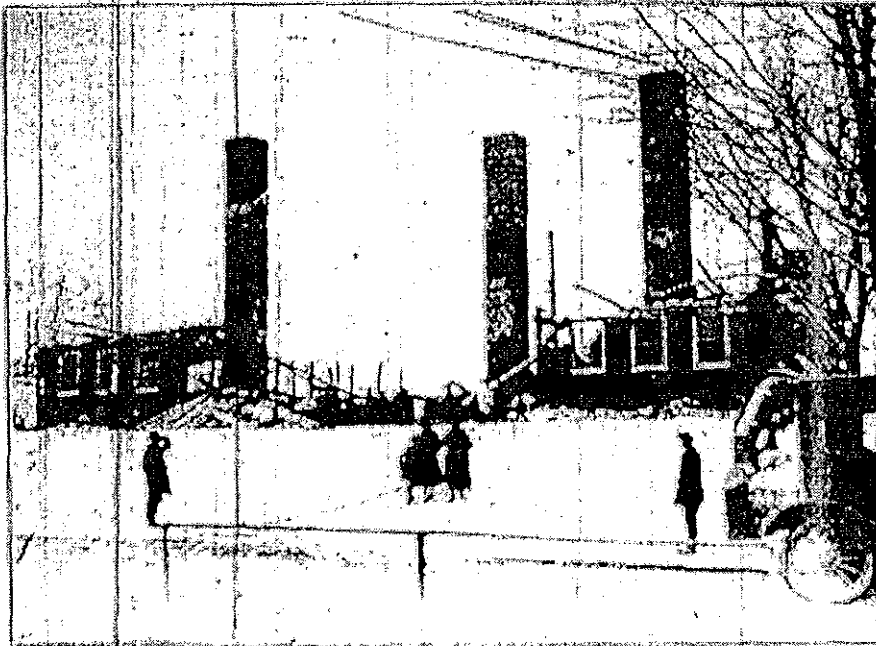
- Regular examination of new approaches that further best practices in the field, use new and possibly untested approaches and brings multiparty, interdisciplinary approaches to enrich community development.
- Researching & implementing innovative best practices & new business models that strengthen the long-term financial stability of the Center.
- Positive, respectful dialogue among all Board and Advisory Group members, its membership and other partnerships & associations when conducting the business, leadership and development of the Center.
- A commitment to stellar customer service to its members and visitors using any of the Center's facilities or services.
- Providing proactive, effective communication — both traditional & digital, to its tenants, members and the public at large — to provide easy access to information, including town services, the town website and other service applications.
- Being open to and responsive to the on-going needs of neighbors, the community and Town leadership.

Avery School Property



THE DEDHAM TRANSCRIPT, JANUARY 22, 1921

RUINS OF A COSTLY BLAZE



to 1.141-rouaf of the Avery Grammar School, which was destroyed in the fire of January 14, 1921